

# SOCIAL JUSTICE AT MENLO COLLEGE

**In collaboration with**

Black Student Voices

## Foreword

Menlo College is committed to taking action to promote social justice. We view with urgency the need to alleviate and prevent situations that were described in the Black Student Voices (BSV) Manifesto dated June 8, 2020. As an outgrowth of discussions that have ensued in the intervening months, this document describes the ways in which the grievances raised in the Manifesto have already started to be addressed, as well as plans to continue to make progress in the near term.

The College is taking further steps to redesign systems that contain inherent inequities in order to fulfill its commitment to *ignite potential* in all of its students. We strongly believe the individual support and success of every Menlo College student to be the foundation upon which the institution will thrive well into its second century.

This vision is outlined below. This is meant to be the start of a living document, which will remain open to input from Black and Brown community members and their allies. Wise action and sustainable results require ongoing dialogue, increased understanding, and continual work. We will proactively seek out feedback from Black and Brown voices during the process, and we anticipate adjustments as the work progresses.

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## A. Immediate Actions

*These items are in progress, with an estimated completion date within the next six months at the latest, unless otherwise noted.*

1. Convene a new Social Justice Task Force with student, alumni, faculty, and staff members, including BSV representatives. The members will be both qualified and positioned to reevaluate, recommend, and/or lead the College's diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging initiatives, including those proposed within this document. The Task Force will create its own charter and will make that public. The optimal reporting structure will be finalized once the new Senior Diversity Officer position is filled.<sup>1</sup>
2. Strengthen the support system for Black, Brown and other students from marginalized communities by making available a list of staff and faculty allies on campus who are trained to help BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) students navigate cultural differences and act as advocates should students find themselves the target of bigotry, racism, microaggression, or harassment. This group would exist in parallel with the Social Justice Task Force and the Student Affairs Office. The optimal reporting structure will be finalized once the new Senior Diversity Officer position is filled.
3. Reevalue and update policies and handbooks for all College employees. This will include but is not limited to:
  - a) Revising Employee and Faculty Handbooks to specifically name racial bias and discrimination within the section entitled: "Standards of Conduct: Unacceptable activities: Major infractions"
  - b) Expanding the anti-harassment policy in Employee and Faculty Handbooks to define racial bias, discrimination, and microaggressions as harassment
  - c) Adding a zero-tolerance policy with respect to discriminatory behavior to Employee and Faculty Handbooks

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<sup>1</sup> A sample task force report is included here for reference:

<https://www.swccd.edu/about-swc/leadership/office-of-the-superintendent-president/advisory-task-force-on-inclusion-and-race-relations.aspx>

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4. Add language to the Student Code of Conduct to specifically prohibit bigotry, racism, discrimination, and microaggressions; add a zero-tolerance policy that includes repercussions for offenders.
  5. Promote the awareness and use of the anonymous reporting process among students and employees who experience or witness racism, misogyny, and bigotry, or other problematic behavior. The anonymous reporting option that is currently available is found at: <https://www.menlo.edu/about/safety-security/report-a-campus-concern/>
  6. Reevaluate the way job qualifications and hiring practices treat cultural sensitivity and competency; include experience supporting the success of BIPOC students as a necessary skill.
  7. Include a Task Force member and/or a student representative on group interview panels during the hiring process. Students are already included, however, we will make a conscious effort to ensure that invitations to participate are extended to students who are passionate about the causes of racial justice and workplace equity.
  8. Establish a Black and Brown Alumni Network and/or Alumni Advisory Council – jointly determine vision and goals for the group(s) and investigate how other successful models might be leveraged to boost new initiatives. For example, there are processes for sourcing speakers, getting the word out about scholarships, mentoring opportunities, and bringing in additional financial support for student organizations. These can be proactively guided to ensure inclusivity for Black/Brown experiences. The alumni office will support this effort.
  9. Draft and include more expansive diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging goals for immediate addition to the College's current strategic plan.
  10. Change the 2020-21 Common Book to one on anti-racism and utilize racially diverse facilitators with relevant experience.
  11. Publish on the website an acknowledgement of the historical presence of the Gabrielino-Tongva tribe on our property. Honor our obligations to the

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Gabrielino-Tongva tribe, and comply with federal law (NAGPRA) in a timely manner in order to repatriate the human remains that are in our possession (this second step is temporarily on hold due to COVID-19).

12. Make public acknowledgement of Menlo College's presence on Ohlone land. Ask the Task Force to explore ways to honor this history and heritage on campus.
13. Keep the commitment to inclusion and equity, anti-racism/bigotry at the fore throughout the College, so every individual is aware of expectations for students, faculty, staff, and the community as a whole. Explicit statements and policies will be captured on the College's website, intranet, job postings, course catalog, class syllabi, admissions literature, communications, etc.

#### **B. Proposed Areas for Social Justice Task Force Input**

*These items are in progress and we will look to the Task Force to take a deeper dive in order to help fill out details and/or provide ongoing feedback after implementation.*

1. Clarify the grievance, investigation, and appeal process for students and employees; provide appropriate ongoing professional development to all staff and faculty to ensure kind and compassionate care and fair resolution for anyone affected.<sup>2</sup>
2. Reexamine proportionality of consequences meted out to offending individuals and repeat offenders, and make appropriate revisions to Employee, Faculty, and Student Handbooks.
3. Ensure clean record-keeping of incidents reported, as well as their resolutions.
4. Research, understand, and implement support to address the specific needs of people of color entering the workplace.

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<sup>2</sup> Please keep in mind that student grievance processes at the College were developed around such infractions as physical violence and drug use, not bigotry. Thus, the work required to reframe the grievance and conduct process may take some time, although it will start immediately.

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5. Actively ensure cultural competency on key decision-making bodies on campus by including appropriate qualifications in job descriptions with respect to 1) cultural awareness, sensitivity, humility, responsiveness, and/or intersectionality and 2) *demonstrated success addressing educational and professional inequities in the higher education space.*
  6. Work with the Provost, Deans, and faculty-led Curriculum Committee to determine steps needed to weave a framework of justice and intersectionality into the entire curriculum, through both new and existing programs. Options can include but are not limited to:
    - a) Courses on race and racism taught by culturally competent instructors, addressing topics such as the effects of racism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and white privilege.
    - b) A Diversity, Equity and Inclusion studies program by the 2021-22 academic year.
    - c) A requirement for all students to study the history of the American economy, global imperialism, the capitalist model, the prison industrial complex, and the military-industrial complex, with specific education around the role of slaves and immigrants at crucial turning points and historical movements of resistance
    - d) Develop a long-term plan for a Center for Social Entrepreneurship, which could include social justice studies, racial equity coursework, alternative economics, non-profit/LLC administration certification, and other related disciplines.
  7. Make active efforts to reinstate BLOC/BSU.
  8. Clubs based around ethnic and/or cultural identities will be allocated specific funds, which are not subject to programming board requirements, in order to help further activities related to their core identity. Club succession and club advisor orientation will be expanded as well, with additional culturally competent support available to multicultural clubs.

### **C. New Senior Diversity Officer Position**

*The following commitments require a dedicated staff member. The position description will capture these and other responsibilities related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging initiatives.*

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1. The Task Force will be an integral part of creating the position description, along with sourcing, interviewing, and rating candidates for the Senior Diversity Officer position to maintain alignment with the goals of the original manifesto as submitted by Black Student Voices and Latinx Club.
  2. Create a clear plan for change management for the areas of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging to make sure this is a constant priority for the College and that the long-term goal is achieved: a campus culture that is actively anti-racist. This will also include convening stakeholders to discuss institutional planning and implementation.
  3. Guide the roles, responsibilities, and evolution of the Social Justice Task Force, as well as College hiring practices, admissions practices, and athletic culture.
  4. Make recommendations to the College regarding how the employee evaluation process might reframe and emphasize cultural competency as a core skill for all employees; incorporate more specific criteria for managers to assess their ability to create and maintain diversity, equity, and inclusion in their own departments.
  5. Collaborate with Human Resources to schedule rigorous ongoing professional development for all employees around cultural awareness, competence and sensitivity; as well as practicing equity and inclusivity, holding safe space, and identifying unconscious/implicit bias.
  6. Work with Student Affairs to teach all incoming students how to create safe spaces, during which a social contract will be jointly developed and agreed upon to decrease the chances of hurtful, discriminatory, or oppressive behavior.
  7. Create and convene regular community empowerment circles for Black, Brown, and other affinity groups to provide support and coaching to provide a safe forum for students, facilitated by appropriate and supportive faculty and staff.
  8. Work with Mental Health Services to provide students with culturally competent therapists.

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9. With the intent to empower a vibrant community, help create physical and emotional safe space for groups that desire exclusive opportunities to bond with and support each other.
  10. Work with Career Services to help students navigate the workplace, including bias, microaggressions, and discrimination.

#### **D. ADA Accessibility**

1. The ADA/accommodations statement has already been updated in the Student Handbook and Course Catalog.
2. Faculty will be provided with professional development opportunities to ensure consistent and appropriate support for students who request accommodations.
3. Preliminary plans to update the physical accessibility of campus are already in development in coordination with an expert consultant. We will also solicit feedback from the UIF team regarding campus-specific attributes, as they have also identified this as a priority. Updates will be provided once the scope of work, financial and timing considerations are better understood.